

# Piccolo Sn

NOBLE & COOLEY

Remember when drum sizes got deeper and snare drums got deeper right along with them? Many drummers are using smaller drums now, resulting in a renewed interest in piccolo snare drums. These smaller snare drums are being used to blend in, pitch-wise, with the other drums in the kit, or for a secondary snare drum sound.

I prefer to think of a true piccolo drum as one similar to Ludwig's old 3 x 13 model. (By the way, if anyone has one, I'll buy it!) Oddly enough, Ludwig is not even producing a piccolo snare at this time. However, many manufacturers today are making "piccolo" snares. Most of these, rather than being true piccolos with a 13" diameter, are merely squashed 14" drums. For all intents and purposes though, we can call them piccolo drums, and here's a look at some of the currently available models.

CB-700



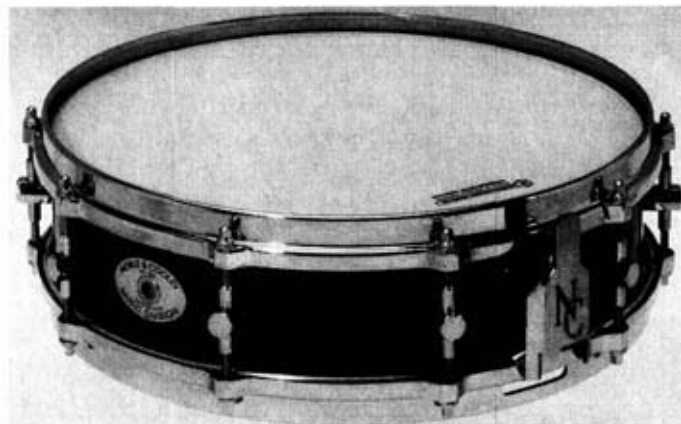
CB-700's new *MS Series* of snare drums includes a 4 1/2 x 13 piccolo snare (the only true piccolo in this review). The drum's shell is 8-ply maple/mahogany, and it has eight double-ended lugs, with plastic gaskets mounted underneath to "float" the lug castings. The snare throw-off uses a center-throw lever, with a fine-tension knob. Twenty-strand wire snares are used on this drum, held with plastic strips.

CB-700 is using 2mm "Power Hoops" on the *MS Series*, which are a bit thicker than normal and can take higher tensions more readily without warping or cracking. To me, they also provide a louder rimshot sound. The drum has two ventholes, and does not have any internal muffling.

The drum I tested came fitted with a coated Remo *Ambassador* batter and a "no-name" snare-side head (presumably made for/by CB-700). To be honest, the thing that most hurt the drum's sound (and tuning) was that bottom snare head. I couldn't get it to seat properly or tune up evenly; it was plainly inferior. After changing it to a Remo *Diplomat*, those problems vanished. I was able to keep the head level, tune it accurately, and make an annoying snare rattle go away. (All the more reason for using quality heads on your drums—beginners, take note!)

The CB-700 piccolo had good volume and response, but I couldn't get it to tune up quite as high as I would have liked. Don't get me wrong; the drum does sound good, and can still be pitched quite a bit higher than a standard-sized drum.

A major appeal of this piccolo snare is the price. Chrome-finished, it retails at only \$119.50. Blond maple or black lacquer finishes are available for \$189.50. CB-700 has always provided decent quality drums at a decent price, and the *MS Piccolo* is a good example. (As an added bonus, a vinyl carrying bag is also included.)



Noble & Cooley makes a 3 3/4 x 14 piccolo drum, using the same materials and specifications as their standard snare drums. The drum is built of 1/4" rock maple, which is steam-bent to form a one-piece solid shell. It has ten double-ended tubular brass lugs. As with their other drums, the lug posts are mounted at the nodal point to maximize shell vibration. (On the piccolo, it's just about center.) Die-cast chrome hoops are used, and there's no internal muffler. Reinforcing rings are used at the top and bottom of the shell.

Noble & Cooley's strainer is one of my all-time favorites. The throw-off is made of lacquered brass, and releases via a center-throw lever. It has a brass knurled knob fine-tension adjustment, and on this drum, the 20-strand wire snares are held with plastic strips. The strainer is incredibly smooth and silent. It's actually simple in design, but works like a dream.

The drum I played was fitted with a coated *Ambassador* batter and a *Diplomat* snare-side. Since there's no internal damper, Noble & Cooley includes one of their *Zero Rings* for the batter head. (A *Zero Ring* is a thin *Mylar O-ring* that lays on the outer perimeter of the head to dampen excessive ring and overtones.)

Like all the Noble & Cooley drums I've played in the past, this 3 3/4" piccolo had a full, vibrant tone with great sensitivity. It tuned up to a high pitch easily, and had more than ample volume; rimshots resounded with a nice crack. The drum is sensitive to feather-touch playing, while at the other extreme, will not choke up under loud playing. Five finishes are available: natural maple and honey maple lacquers, and white, red, and black polyurethanes. The drum retails at \$598.00 and certainly earns a five-star rating in all aspects of design, sound, and playability.

A new addition to the Noble & Cooley line is their 6 x 12 *Drumbali*. The *Drumbali* shares many features with Noble & Cooley's other snare drums (rock maple shell, brass strainer, etc.), but also has some differences. The *Drumbali* has six chromed double-ended lugs, which are a variation on their standard lugs. They're still tubular, but are formed to a large rectangle at the bottom. Each lug is attached to the shell with a single screw; the rest of the casting does not touch the shell. The shell's interior has two reinforcing rings: One is near the bottom, at the nodal point (where the lugs attach); the other is equidistant from the top. There is a single venthole, and the drum has a 12-strand wire snare unit, held with cording.

I must mention that Noble & Cooley's bearing edges are simply beautiful. They are expertly cut so that drumhead-to-shell contact is at a minimum, which allows for sensitive response.

The *Drumbali* sent to me was fitted with a *FiberSkyn 2* thin

# are Drums

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

batter and a *Diplomat* snare-side head, but no *Zero Ring*. The premise behind the design of the *Drumbali* is to give the drummer a snare drum also capable of producing a realistic timbale sound. In its snare drum form, it's crisp and dynamic. Throw off the snares, and the drum instantly turns into a cutting high-pitched timbale with great resonance. I wouldn't really recommend the *Drumbali* as your primary snare drum, but it can definitely function as a secondary snare, giving an articulate piccolo snare sound, plus a good timbale sound for Latin and reggae music. The *Drumbali* also retails at \$598.00.

## IMPACT



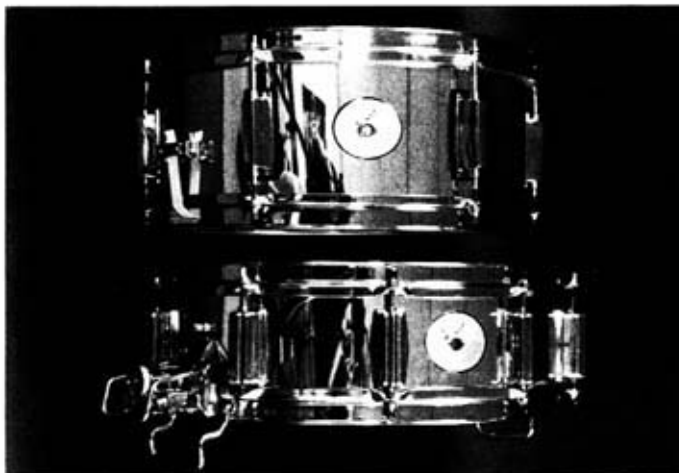
Impact makes a fiberglass-shell drum measuring 4 1/2 x 14, which is the largest of the piccolo snares reviewed here. It also has 12 double-ended lugs, giving it the most tension points of the drums I tested.

A sophisticated parallel-lay strainer is used. The throw-off side works via a large cross-lever, and also has a fine-tension knob near its bottom. (The butt end also has a tension knob.) Twenty-strand wire snares attach directly to both ends of the strainer, and extend past the snare head on both sides. To allow for this, the bottom hoop is entirely cut away, leaving an open gate. Steel guard rails are attached to the tuning rods adjacent to the throw-off and butt assemblies. A steel rod passes through the inside of the drum to connect up with both ends of the strainer unit. Impact's snare strainer is extremely silent when switching on and off; there is virtually no slap of the snares hitting the head. It works well, and has various tension and leveling adjustments.

The drum has two ventholes, each of which is surrounded by a rubber grommet. Impact still provides an internal muffler, which will lock its position on or off at a single touch, and can be adjusted for the degree of dampening desired.

Four covered finishes are available: chrome, black, white, and gray. The drum I tested came with a coated *Ambassador* batter and an *Ambassador* snare-side head. The drum had a full-bodied, bright sound (thanks to the fiberglass shell). It cut through quite well, and rimshots resounded with a good crack. The extended snares helped to give this drum a crisp, snappy response. Even at its 4 1/2" depth, it was still able to provide a high-pitched, lively piccolo sound. I would consider using Impact's drum in many situations—even as a primary snare drum, since it will also tune down lower and still retain a solid sound. The suggested retail price is \$270.00.

## R.O.C.



R.O.C. makes many different sized snare drums—some even "exotic." Most of their drums, including the 5 x 13 piccolo I tried, are made of 10-ply mahogany/oriental hickory.

R.O.C.'s 5 x 13 snare has six double-ended lugs, all backed with felt. It uses a simple side-throw strainer, with 11" 16-strand wire snares. A lock on/off internal muffler is installed. The drumshell has very acute bearing edges cut on both sides, which finely slope down for the first 3/4 inch or so of the shell. The primary, head-seating edge is quite thin.

An R.O.C. silver-spot clear head was fitted on the batter side, and a milky-white smooth head was on the snare side. I don't have much faith in these heads; they fit very tightly to the shell, negating any positive influence the thin edges may have on the drum's tone and response. Along with the fact that the wire snares were two inches shorter than the diameter of the snare head, the drum sounded dry and choked. It did have a quick decay, but was not as "snappy" as others. The drum had the capability for loud volume, but sensitivity for quiet playing was unfortunately not there. The drum retails at a suggested price of \$166.00.

R.O.C. also sent a 4 1/2 x 14 drum, made of 10-ply poplar/maple/oriental mahogany, covered in chrome. It has ten felt-backed, double-ended lugs, a parallel strainer with 20-strand split snares (along with a steel rod through the shell), the same acutely formed bearing edges, plus a lock on/off internal muffler. The strainer has a fine-tension knob on both ends, and works with a lever release. It's fairly massive, having two steel guard rails per side, and worked rather stiffly, I thought.

Physically, the lugs on this drum were not centered on the shell, and in a few instances, actually touched the bottom head hoop. This might cause some tuning problems with the snare head. The drum came with transparent batter and snare-side heads. It had good attack and more snap to it than the 5 x 13, although it was still a bit dry-sounding. This snare drum did respond well at its higher tunings, but would benefit immensely from different heads. The drum lists for \$159.00.

R.O.C. says they've learned to "manipulate" wood for specific performance abilities, and can also do shells ranging from five to 15 plies using mahogany, maple, birch, teak, rosewood, luaan, poplar, oak, bubinga, burl, or eucalyptus. PVC covering is standard (in black, white, blue/white, wine red, or midnight blue). Mylar and bubinga burlwood finishes are extra. Other piccolo-type sizes available are 4 x 14, 6 1/2 x 13, 8 x 13, 5 x 12, 6 1/2 x 12, and 8 x 12. (On the other end of the spectrum, they make a 14 x

# AN UNSUNG HERO

The drumming world has committed a felony. On August 17, 1987 arguably the greatest drummer of all time passed on. His death was only acknowledged by a single while meaningful article in the back of this magazine, the heartfelt act of one of his students. With that his importance was put to bed by the drumming world.

Approximately two years before, the only article relating his career barely scratched the surface, and with his quiet passing his significance has been brushed over. Subsequent interviews with many of his former students (some of today's most famous and successful drummers) failed to mention his influence. Shockingly, his importance is being so underweighed that one wonders if people actually know what this man accomplished.

The fact is that **Gary Chester** played on more important records than any drummer of all time. Most studio musicians only last five to seven years. Gary's career lasted thirty years. While his most memorable recordings are Rock, R&B, Pop and Soul, his early live playing was Big Band and Jazz with greats of the forties and fifties. To detail his career would take on an entire issue of this magazine, so let it suffice to say that if anyone ever picks up a drumstick with out listening to this man's playing then they haven't learned the first rudiment. The veterans of the music industry regard him as the best there ever was, simply one of a kind. On only one occasion was I honored to see Gary play and what I witnessed was something that no drummer of today possesses. His feel was a vintage that is just not available today.

For the family of **Gary Chester**, as well as his students, friends and colleagues, the only way for right to be done is for all drummers to go back and examine his influence and then realize that one can never say enough about the drummer who did it all.

In The Still Of The Nite—The Five Satins  
Sixteen Candles—The Crests  
Great Pretenders—The Platters  
Pretty Little Angel Eyes—Curtis Lee  
Mr. Bassman—Johnny Cymbal  
The Locomotion—Little Eva  
Yakety Yak—The Coasters  
It Hurts To Be In Love—Gene Pitney  
Twist & Shout—The Isley Brothers  
Tell Him—The Exciters  
Our Day Will Come—Ruby & The Romantics  
My Boyfriends Back—The Angels  
Sheri—The Four Seasons  
She Cried—Jay & The Americans  
Uptown—The Crystals

Downtown—Petula Clark  
Hurts So Bad—Little Anthony & The Imperials  
Breakin' Up Is Hard To Do—Neil Sedaka  
It's My Party—Leslie Gore  
Wishin' & Hopin'—Dusty Springfield  
He's So Fine—The Chiffons  
Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow—The Shirelles  
Stand By Me—Ben E. King  
Up On The Roof—The Drifters  
Walk On By—Donna Warwick  
Do You Believe In Magic—Lovin' Spoonful  
I'm A Believer—The Monkees  
Sugar, Sugar—The Archies  
Brown Eyed Girl—Van Morrison  
Bad, Bad Leroy Brown—Jim Croce

May this small selection of recordings serve to familiarize people with the Artistry of the Greatest Drummer of all time. On behalf of the family, friends, students, and colleagues of

**GARY CHESTER**  
May His Memory Live On!

14 snare drum on legs!)

In fairness to R.O.C., I'd like to temper any comments pertaining to the hardware on their drums with the statement that, according to company president Glen Quan, their entire focus is on their shells. They feel that using generically available, moderate-cost hardware helps them to keep overall drum cost down, and that they can more than make up for any acoustic deficiencies that the hardware might cause by what they can do with the shells. In addition, they are more than happy to create drums for customers using any specific brand of hardware desired.

## TEMPUS



Tempus Instruments of Canada is offering a 4 1/2 x 14 fiberglass piccolo snare drum. Their drum has ten double-ended lugs, with nylon washers on the rods to cancel metal-to-metal contact. Tempus's shell is different from Impact's fiberglass shell in that the interior has a black matted texture, rather than being smooth. Also, the exterior colored finish is part of the shell itself, instead of a laminated covering.

Since Tempus doesn't produce its own strainer unit, the drum I received was fitted with a Drum Workshop cross-lever throw-off and a Pearl adjustable-slide butt. The throw-off operates smoothly and is easy to adjust. The lever is pretty much flush with the top of the drum so that it doesn't get in the way. Twenty-strand wire snares are used, and are attached via plastic strips.

The drum came fitted with coated *Ambassador* batter and *Diplomat* snare-side heads. Tuned to its upper limits, this drum has a very loud, piercing sound. Due to the fiberglass shell, it's brighter than most, allowing it even more cutting power. (At times, it came close to hurting my ears!) There is no internal muffler, but a thin *Zero Ring* dampened out any annoying ring. Throughout its tuning range, the Tempus drum spoke clearly, and at the piccolo level, had a nice "pop."

Fiberglass is less prone to being affected by temperature and humidity changes than wood. The sound is not as warm as wood, of course, but the reflective qualities of fiberglass make for a nice, bright piccolo snare sound.

Available shell colors are yellow, red, black, white, grey, and blue. Other colors are available on a custom basis (as per the Ferro Enamels color chart). The 4 1/2 x 14 retails at \$297.00. When I last spoke to Tempus, they had successfully developed a 6 x 13 drum, and were experimenting with other sizes.

Previous *Product Close-Up* columns have reviewed these other piccolo snares: Joe Montineri soprano drums: 4 x 12, 5 x 12 (September 1987); Premier 2024: 4 x 14 (March 1988); Yamaha SD-493: 3 1/2 x 14 (March 1988). For a complete overview of available piccolo snare models, check out MD's latest *Equipment Annual*.

## CORRECTION

Hank Jaramillo's column entitled "A Chorus Line" [*Tracking*, June '88 MD] indicated that Hank had played on the original soundtrack recording of the Broadway show of the same name. This was an editorial misinterpretation of Hank's original manuscript. Although Hank has been playing in the orchestra for *A Chorus Line* since six months after the show opened, he would like it made clear that the drumming on the soundtrack recording was done by Allen Herman. MD offers it apologies to both gentlemen for the confusion.

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